

residents in the State of New Jersey. From raising money for scholarships to renovating community centers such as La Casa Puerto Rico Cultural Center, the PRHSC has continued to be a driving force to improve the community.

Armed with a vision to promote Puerto Rican culture through pride and unity, the PRHSC began its annual parade 37 years ago in Newark. Starting out with just a few local organizations marching down Broad Street in Newark, the parade has grown to more than 100 groups marching in a two hour televised event. In addition, a feast, "Fiestas Patronales," the largest of its kind attracting more than 150,000 people, was added to the festivities seven years ago at Branch Brook Park.

Through the years, the parade has expanded the scope to applaud the achievements of other Hispanic communities such as Dominicans, Ecuadorians, Colombians, Peruvians, and Uruguayans.

In addition, the parade and PRHSC have helped to create a forum in which the Hispanic community and the business community can join and work together to spread the message of unity. As we approach the 21st Century, PRHSC has spearheaded the effort to encourage businesses and leaders to invest in, and appeal to, the still largely untapped Hispanic community.

For its commitment to the Puerto Rican and larger Hispanic communities, I ask my colleagues to join me in congratulating New Jersey's Puerto Rican Heritage Statewide Committee. Its tireless efforts have truly made a difference and continue to better the people of the State.

HAROLD LEWIS (PONT) FREEL—
ONE OF THE THOUSAND POINTS
OF LIGHT AND A GREAT AMERICAN

HON. SCOTT McINNIS

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 8, 1999

Mr. McINNIS. Mr. Speaker, Harold Lewis Freel, known by everyone as "Pont" was a great man who will be greatly missed. The second in a family with eight children, he quit school in the 10th grade to pick corn to help his family survive. During the "dust bowl", when he was 17, his family moved to Moffat, Colorado. The family arrived in the San Luis Valley in a pickup truck which is still on the property today. From this humble beginning, Pont achieved much by hard work and dedication to the values that have made the United States of America a great country.

During World War II, Pont was a Tech Sergeant in the Army Air Corps, flying thirty-eight missions in a B-17. He was shot down on March 16, 1944 over Yugoslavia and was held by the Germans as a prisoner of war for fourteen months. General Patton, riding aboard a tank, freed him in the final days of the war. After the war, he worked feeding cattle for others, and worked construction to get his own start in the ranching business. Hard work and "stubbornness" helped Pont survive the trials

of life. When he died, he had a ranch, which encompassed 5,300 deeded acres and he ran 500 head of cattle. There was no horse he couldn't ride, no job too big and no person lacked value.

Pont had four biological children, two step-children and many others that called his ranch home. His home was always open to children who needed a place to live and to learn how to live. Sometimes they came for the summer, but stayed for many years. His hand and home was always open to those in need.

Pont believed in service to his country, community, to all children and to schools. Although he had only a 10th grade education, he recognized the value of an education for the youth of this country. He served on the Moffat and Mountain Valley School Boards for a total of twenty-six years. Pont was elected County Commissioner of Saguache County at the age of 67 and served for four years, using his knowledge of big equipment to concentrate on the roads of this large rural county in the heart of the Rocky Mountains.

He was a model of American ideals for his community and young people everywhere, embodying patriotism, strength, gentleness and service throughout his lifetime. With his passing, a great American has disappeared from our midst. One of the thousand points of light has gone out, but his memory lives on in those who were privilege to have known him.

T-38 AVIONICS UPGRADE PROGRAM

HON. J.D. HAYWORTH

OF ARIZONA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 8, 1999

Mr. HAYWORTH. Mr. Speaker, I would like to bring the T-38 Avionics Upgrade Program (AUP) to the attention of my colleagues and the American people. The T-38 program is an essential aircraft system for training Air Force pilots. Recently, during OPERATION ALLIED FORCES, we became acutely aware of the critical shortage of pilots in the Air Force and the other services. The T-38 AUP is a key asset in helping the Air Force to reduce this pilot shortage. I am pleased to report that, following some early hardware-software developmental problems, this week the Air Force gave the go-ahead for Low Rate Initial Production for the T-38 AUP.

Earlier this month, the House Appropriations Committee recommended substantial reductions in production funding for the T-38 AUP for both fiscal year 1999 and fiscal year 2000. The rationale was to give more time for development and testing to correct hardware and software deficiencies and to meet the "fly before buy" criteria established by the Air Force. This action will delay the program by a year or more and consequently delay the delivery of state-of-the-art advanced training aircraft to the Air Force.

The T-38 AUP is an Air Force modernization program to update obsolete avionics, controls, and cockpit displays in 509 T-38 trainer aircraft. It also provides 36 new ground-based trainers that reflect the new T-38 cockpits, and provides logistics support at six Air Force

bases around the country. I am proud of the work that is being done in my district at Williams Gateway Airport to provide a modernized trainer for America's future fighter and bomber pilots.

Over the past year, the Williams Gateway team has been hard at work to bring the T-38 trainer up to the level necessary to produce pilots who are ready to step into our current fighters and bombers. However, as stated in the House Appropriations Committee report language, hardware and software problems discovered during developmental flight testing at Edwards Air Force Base caused the Air Force to decide on March 10, 1999 to delay the program for correction and flight testing of the discrepancies.

With the tremendous efforts of the Air Force and the T-38 contractor team, all critical hardware and software problems discovered during flight testing have been fixed and the following flights were successful flights. All flight testing was completed at Edwards on July 9, 1999. This entire corrective process, typical of a development phase, took less than four months. The Air Force has thoroughly reviewed the entire process, determined that the "fly before buy" criteria have been met, and on July 26, 1999 approved initial low-rate production of the T-38 AUP. There is no longer any reason to further delay the program. I do not think that this information about the rapid correction of problems was available to the House Appropriations Committee prior to the House vote to reduce funding earlier this month.

Full fiscal year 1999 and 2000 production funding is required to keep the T-38 AUP on schedule. First aircraft deliveries are required at Moody Air Force Base in Georgia by August of next year. Delaying the T-38 AUP program will have a significant effect on pilot training and will increase overall program costs and operations and maintenance costs associated with the older versions of the T-38 aircraft.

Air Force pilot training and retention is a national security issue. The T-38 AUP is a critical vehicle in the process of helping the Air Force improve its pilot situation. In addition to being a low cost trainer, the T-38 AUP will provide the configurations in avionics and cockpit design the pilots need to train. By slipping this program out a year, we will be forcing America's finest new fighter and bomber pilots to use an aircraft with 1950's and 1960's cockpit technology.

Funding reductions this year would unnecessarily delay the T-38 development efforts by a year or more, delay needed upgrades for critical Air Force pilot training needs, and increase fiscal year 2000 research and development costs by millions and program production costs by tens of millions. Additionally, if the program is delayed, operations and maintenance costs will increase by millions annually because of parts shortages and other difficulties associated with maintaining the older T-38 aircraft with the high failure rates of their obsolete avionics components. Finally, the delay will result in loss of some of the valuable workforce experience that has been hard-won during the development phase of the program.

Mr. Speaker, as we enter the new millennium, we would be doing a disservice to our future pilots by training them in aircraft with